



VARIANCES TO STANDARDS APPLICATION

(Draft – May 2013)

Purpose: ARM 10.55.604.1. A local board of trustees may apply to the Board of Public Education through the Superintendent of Public Instruction to implement a variance to a standard or a section of standards, excluding standards stating statutory criteria, standards pertaining to educator licensure or endorsement, and content standards as defined by the Board of Public Education and provided in guidance from the Superintendent of Public Instruction.

DUE DATES

ONE-TIME ONLY DUE DATE

- **First round application only:** Second semester 2013-14 implementation
Wednesday, July 17, 2013

REGULAR DUE DATES

- First semester implementation; first Monday in March
 - Second semester implementation; first Monday in July
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COUNTY: Ravalli

DISTRICT: Darby Public Schools

LIST THE SCHOOL OR MULTIPLE SCHOOLS THAT ARE REQUESTING THE VARIANCE(S): Darby Elementary School, Darby Junior High, and Darby High School

1. **Is this an initial application (2 years) or a Renewal application (3 years)?**
Initial application (2 years)
2. **Is this for first semester implementation or second semester implementation?**
Second Semester
3. **Please attach evidence through official minutes of the board of trustees that local school community stakeholders were involved in the consideration and development of the proposed variance to standards. Stakeholder groups include trustees, administrators, teachers, classified school staff, parents, community members, and students as applicable.**
Minutes of the July 8, 2013 Meeting are attached, and a copy of a School Leadership Team Meeting held in May, 2013 are also attached.
4. **Please provide evidence that the board of trustees adopted its application for variance at an official, properly noticed meeting of its board of trustees.**
Minutes of the July 8, 2013 Meeting are attached





5. **Standard(s) for which a variance is requested, i.e., 10.55.709. If there is a program delivery standard, be sure to list it as well. For example, 10.55.1801.**
10.55.601(3)

6. **Describe the variance requested.**

Due to the rigorous nature of the AdvancED/NWAC accreditation process, Darby Schools requests that they be allowed to use the AdvancED/NWAC process in replacement of 10.55.601(3). We see this as a duplication of efforts.

7. **Provide a brief statement of mission and objectives of this proposed variance.**

It is the mission of the Darby Schools to use this variance to promote rigor, equity, student engagement, and depth of knowledge for our students. The objectives are as follows;

1. Utilize a school improvement plan that requires identification of goals for improvement of achievement and instruction.
2. Utilize collaborative learning communities to increase teacher skills in grading and reporting that is based on clear criteria for attainment of knowledge and skills.
3. Continue to develop the use of data to promote growth in student learning, student readiness for the next level, and student success at the next level.
4. Develop a comprehensive student assessment system with local and standard assessments resulting in a range of data about student learning.

8. **In what way does this variance to standard meet the specific needs of the students in your school(s)?**

Darby Schools are regionally accredited through AdvancED/NWAC. To obtain this accreditation, the schools go through a rigorous process that includes a self-assessment in relation to research based standards and indicators, student performance diagnostics, survey data from parents, teachers, and students as well as an external review from an outside team of educators every five years. An extensive educationally based continuous school improvement process is required from AdvancED indicators 1.3, 3.2, 3.4, 3.8, 3.11, 5.4, and 5.5. A school district education profile is required from AdvancED indicators 5.1, 5.2, 3.2, and 3.6. A description of strategies for assessing student progress is required from AdvancED indicators 3.2 and 5., and a professional development component is required from indicators 2.6, 3.3, 3.4, 3.5, 3.7, 3.11, and 5.3. A description of these indicators is attached. With the steps required through the AdvancED process, Darby Schools meets and exceeds 10.55.601(3), therefore duplication of efforts is not needed. Due to the self review and external review required, students will be benefited by vertically and horizontally aligned programs. This process promotes rigor, equity, student engagement and depth of application of knowledge. The school improvement plan requires identification of goals for



improvement of achievement and instruction. Teachers participate in collaborative learning communities, and grading and reporting must be based on clear criteria for attainment of knowledge and skills. Finally, Darby Schools must demonstrate, using data, growth in student learning, student readiness for the next level, and student success at the next level.

9. Variance to Standard: Outline how and why the proposed variance would be:

a. Workable. (Sufficient district resources are available for the success of the variance.)

Darby Schools have sufficient resources for this variance. An annual fee to Advanced/NWAC is paid which provides all information needed for the standards and indicators, student performance diagnostics, surveys and survey results. The annual fee also includes the Advanced Adaptive System of School Improvement Support Tools (ASSIST), a state-of-the-art system that allows schools to streamline and enhance their efforts to boost student success. The school also has the opportunity to receive training at the annual Advanced/NWAC School Improvement Conference.

b. Educationally sound. (Applicant has relied on sound research as a rationale for the variance.)

The Advanced/NWAC standards and indicators are research based. The following is from the Advanced website; "With over a century of work in schools and districts throughout the world, Advanced collects and manages information that has the potential to revolutionize the way we think about continuous improvement and the factors that have the greatest promise for ensuring student success. For that reason, we have committed to an ambitious 5-year research agenda that will uncover the impact of accreditation on school improvement and student achievement. The objective is to provide the education community with research-based strategies, conditions, and behaviors that lead to transformative school improvement. A research team of academics and practitioners has already published two studies, Learning from Accreditation and District Accreditation: Leveraging Change.

Dedicated to both school and system improvement, we are proud to be able to share our depth of knowledge with the greater educational community. As a knowledge leader in the area of education policy and practice, we know our research will not only be a catalyst for positive change, but will transform the way educators approach educational innovation and continuous improvement." (Advanced website <http://www.advanced.org/schoolimprovement-research>)

c. Designed to meet or exceed results under established standards. (Desired results are clearly identified with data to be gathered as evidence of the success of the variance.)

As a result of our Advanced/NWAC accreditation status, Darby Schools goes through a rigorous process that includes a self-assessment in relation to research based standards and indicators, student performance diagnostics, survey data from parents, teachers and students as well as an external review from an outside team of educators every five years. An extensive educationally based continuous school improvement process is required from Advanced indicators 1.3, 3.2, 3.4, 3.8, 3.11, 5.4, and 5.5. A school district education profile is required from Advanced indicators 5.1, 5.2,



3.2, and 3.6. A description of strategies for assessing student progress is required from AdvancED indicators 3.2 and 5., and a professional development component is required from indicators 2.6, 3.3, 3.4, 3.5, 3.7, 3.11, and 5.3. A description of these indicators is attached. With the steps required through the AdvancED process, Darby Schools meets and exceeds 10.55.601(3), therefore duplication of efforts is not needed.

d. Where applicable, aligned with program standards under ARM 10.55.1101 through 10.55.1901.

Attached are all AdvancED Standards and Indicators that frame vertical and horizontal alignment for all program offerings required by the Montana Office of Public Instruction.

10. List at least one specific measurable objective(s) that demonstrates that the proposed variance will meet or exceed the results under the current standard(s).

1. Darby School Teachers will implement lessons aligned to the Common Core Standards 100% of the time, and use Differentiated Instruction 80% of the time as measured by self-assessment and administrator observation.
2. Darby students will exceed the state average in mathematics achievement scores on the 2015 test.
3. Darby students will exceed the state average in reading achievement scores on the 2015 test.
4. Darby's class of 2015 will have at least a 90% graduation rate.
5. District English/Language Arts curriculum will be reviewed to ensure compliance with the Montana Common Core by July 31, 2014.

11. What data or evidence will be gathered to document progress toward meeting the measurable objective(s)?

1. Administrator walk-throughs, formal evaluations, peer reviews, and self assessments.
2. Mathematics scores will be gathered from the results of the 2015 Smarter Balance Assessment.
3. Reading scores will be gathered from the results of the 2015 Smarter Balance Assessment.
4. Graduation rate data will be tracked by the cohort through the Office of Public Instruction.
5. By participating in the Ravalli County Curriculum Consortium, our curriculum will be reviewed in June of 2014 to ensure curriculum guides, pacing guides and common assessments are aligned to the Montana Common Core.

RENEWAL APPLICATION ONLY: Please attach a summary of the data gathered to demonstrate that the variance cycle ending June 30, met or exceeded the standard. State the measurable objective for the initial or previous application.



Montana
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Denise Juneau, State Superintendent

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Board Chair Name: ERIK ABRAHAMSEN

Board Chair Signature: [Signature] Date: _____

Superintendent Name: Loyd D. Rennaker

Superintendent Signature: [Signature] Date 7/9/13

OPI USE ONLY

Superintendent of Public Instruction [Signature] Date 12/2/13

☒ Approve ☐ Disapprove

Board of Public Education Chair [Signature] Date 11-15-2013

☒ Approve ☐ Disapprove

